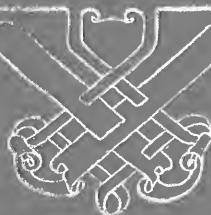


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LYRICS OF A LAD

SCHARMEL IRIS





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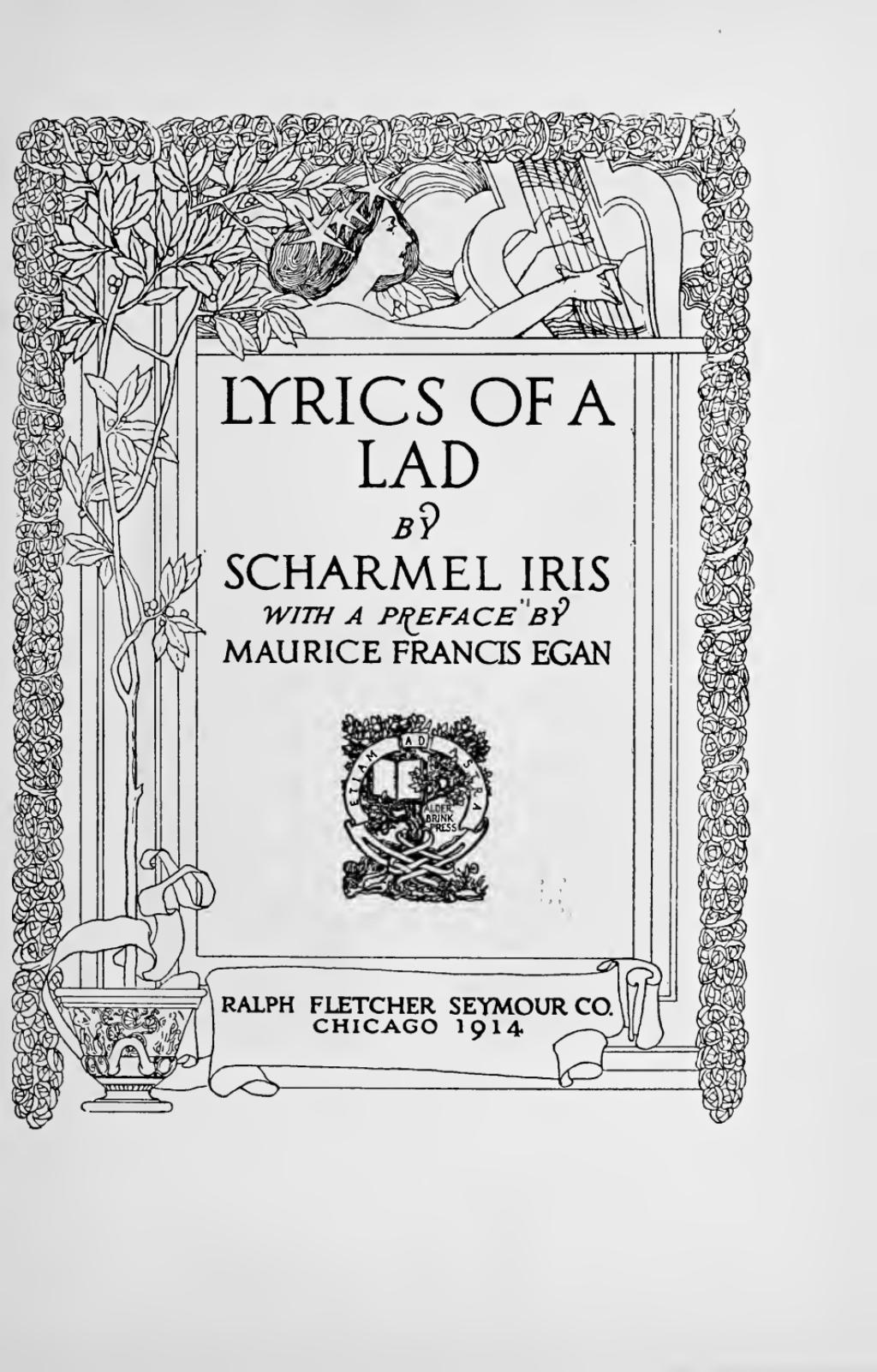
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LYRICS OF A LAD





LYRICS OF A LAD

BY

SCHARMEL IRIS
WITH A PREFACE BY
MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN



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To that patron of arts and lover of Italy

MRS. HAROLD F. McCORMICK

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The courteous acknowledgments of the author are extended to *The Century Magazine*, *The Little Review*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *The Forum*, *Poetry* and the *Cosmopolitan*, of America; *The Cork Examiner*, *Freeman's Journal* and *Dublin Review*, of Ireland; and *The English Review* and *Blackwood's*, of England.

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PREFACE



T will interest the public to know that Federico Scharmel Iris was born February tenth, eighteen-eighty-nine, at Florence, Italy. He is the first of the Italians in America to write poetry in English. Richard Le Gallienne, William Dean Howells and the late Francis Thompson were a few of the many to express appreciation. He asks that the work shall stand solely on its merits. His poems first won him favor with John Ruskin, the critic, and Swinburne, the poet,—two men of mark of our age. Through these two geniuses, I discovered that the new poet was an Italian graft on an Illinois,—peach tree is perhaps the best word,—though I have never seen peach trees in Chicago,—and I then read his poems with renewed interest. I did not find them Illinoisian; but I did find in his poems the color and the freshness, the inexpressible glowing, almost lucent tints of the peach blossom, the warm lure of Spring and of love and of hope. The healthful cold of the winter, with all its frost pangs, gave beauty to the roseate blossoms, as the busy life of the poet has helped to make the delicate bloom of his Spring delightful. Life has taught him, that the gift of song is a solace, and he says that speechless hearts must be sadder than his own.

In this little garden of a young poet the lilacs bloom, the daffodils cover the green with their gold, the blue flower de luce nods in the Spring wind, and all is beauty and simplicity, and at night the lute of the morning is changed for the 'cello; the tones of the singer are deeper and more sonorous, and the moon comes up, and his moods follow her with the tide. His book is, then,—under the sun or moon, the garden of a young poet, who forgets the brevity of his life and the reality of his griefs in the joy of the art he cultivates. You are invited to step into his garden.

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN,

American Minister to Denmark.

Copenhagen.



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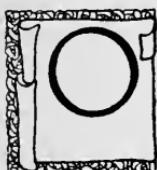
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LYRICS OF A LAD



LYRICS OF A LAD

PRESAGE



HUSH thee, rest thee, little son
Upon my quiet breast!
My rose-red blood runs fast and warm,
O sacred seedling blest!
It thrills the very soul of me
To hear thy heart beat joyously.

The marvel of thy magic hand
(Like rose-leaf held in mine);
Two tiny feet that press my side—
Thrill in my veins like wine;
Did Mary ever feel more bliss
Than I, when my sweet babe I kiss?

Through solemn vigils of the night
When all the earth holds breath—
I feel the life I gave thee move
And yet I muse on Death.

Ah, me! what fears a mother knows
Before the dawn of morning glows!

LYRICS OF A LAD

Lie closer, closer, little son
Against my throbbing heart!
What is there in the moaning wind
To make the salt tears start?
A dreadful voice calls hauntingly
With sorrow fraught and mystery.

LYRICS OF A LAD

TRIO OF SPRING SONGS

I—AT MORNING

The eastern sky is all ablaze
With gold and rose;
The stream holds fair the azure air;
The south wind blows.

Hark! o'er the road the thrush glad sings;
The wood is green;
The violet with dew is wet
'Mid sylvan sheen.

The dawn is glad with melody
As Spring is born;
On rosy wings the daylight sings
Good morn! good morn!

II—INVITATION

O, let us go a-gypsyng, my Love,
Through calm, green woods where softly cooes the dove.
And I will wreath the flowers of the way
To crown you queen! I'll sing to you all day.
Come, Love, away!

Come, while the groves are fresh aglow with dew,
And while the sun of gold shines 'mid the blue,
And low with love, yet loud with joy complete,
We'll sing clear strains of gladness. Blithe your feet,
My Love, my Sweet!

LYRICS OF A LAD

Let's leave behind our sorrows and our cares;
Beside the brook her breast the lily bares:
The wind invites and pleads with us to play.
Adown and o'er the countryside to-day
Come, Love, away!

III—INVOCATION

I wonder why the rose is red, my Love,
And why the violet is blue.
The rose is red in jealousy of you;
The violet but imitates your eyes
And sighs, and sighs,
My Love, O my Love!

I wonder why the lily's white with grace,
And why the daffodil is gold.
The lily's chalice keeps your dreams in hold;
The daffodil, in envy of your hair,
Is fair, is fair,
My Love, O my Love!

LYRICS OF A LAD

THE HEART-CRY OF THE CELTIC MAID

There were blackbirds in the hedges and sunshine in the sky,
Red lilies in the sedges where blue rivulets ran by;
The spring's gay flowers and children—Oh, how jubilant
they were
Veiled was the wall of heaven by blithe singing-birds astir!

What use the heart-red roses, or the azure of the sky?
They were fair in Love's reposes; my love shall never die!
A shadow filled your eyes, my dear, I died to you, and yet
Whenever fall the autumn leaves I dream and can't forget.

Forget you, O, forget you?—why, I cannot even die!
The sun has lost its radiance, the lustre's left my eye.
My heart is tired of longing, and my soul weeps o'er its pain;
I turn to east, I turn to west, and see you not again.

The south wind you have taken and my heart have taken, too;
The sunshine and the gladness and the songs I held most true.
At dawn, at noon, at dusk, Love, I walk the dewy sod;
My fear is great, my fear is great, you've taken e'en my God.

What use the heart-red roses, or the azure of the sky?
They were sweet in Love's sweet closes; would Love that I
might die!
My heart is tired of longing, and my soul weeps o'er its pain;
I turn to east, I turn to west, and see you not again.

LYRICS OF A LAD

TRANSITION

Lapis-lazuli is the sea,
A golden chariot, rides the Dawn,
The morning twilight rests upon
The apple-blossoms' witchery.

The Sun his argosy of clouds
Sails in the sky; the silver rain
Falls o'er the landscape of the plain,
The trees become as sombre shrouds.

The shower ends; and glowing, bright,
The rosy colors merge from gray;
The paling orange edge of day
Recedes from Evening's sword of light;

The hill, a bed is for the Sun,
The stars rise from a silver swoon,
To dance at rising of the Moon—
The day was a chameleon.

LYRICS OF A LADD

THE WITCH

My mistress Mildred, fair and good,
Is one of that weird sisterhood
That ride at midnight on the air,
And brew strange potions hov'ring where
Are witches' caldrons in the wood.

I saw her kneel by Michael's side
Within the church,—he of my pride.
(The lover whom in spring she wed—
That night she rose and left his bed,
At dawn returned a faithless bride.)

Nine trees grow round the mystic well
Wherein she bathed to work a spell;
Round Michael's wrist I found a hair
That Lilith gave her for a snare,
Lilith who is the queen of hell.

My prayers to heaven ascend like myrrh.
To break the evil spell of her,
Unto the good saint Anne I prayed:
She passes in her silks arrayed,
She who is kin to Lucifer.

LYRICS OF A LAD

CANZONETTA

I cannot see the roses,
Though once I loved their bloom,
'Twould be too much of agony
To breathe their sweet perfume;
'Twould be too much of agony
To breathe their sweet perfume.

She passed when passed the roses,
My red rose of God's art;
And for her vanished loveliness
Alone I break my heart;
And for her vanished loveliness
Alone I break my heart.

I buried her in roses,
My queen-rose of the June,
On the pine's harp a spirit played
A melancholy rune;
On the pine's harp a spirit played
A melancholy rune.

So show me not the roses,
I must not see their bloom;
'Twould be too much of agony
To breathe their sweet perfume;
'Twould be too much of agony
To breathe their sweet perfume.

LYRICS OF A LAD

VITA NUOVA

The orange moon moves placidly
Across the purple eminence;
The thrush spills golden radiance
From boughs of dusk. Through waves I see

A nude nymph's phosphorescent sheen
(Two rosebuds pierce a breast of snow);
From blue-bronze twilight passing slow
Queen Juno's peacocks lord the green.

My face and limbs grow ivory-wan
While angry winds the leaves affright;
I worship as a neophyte
The mystic pageantry of night.
Lo! at the threshold of the dawn
My soul to newer life is drawn.

WEIRD OF DOOM

Of wine I've no need, dear,
For wine is accursed;
At the wells of your eyes, dear,
I slaken my thirst.

The rubies of sunset,
The gold of the morn,
The lovely moon's silver,
The rose without thorn,

The starred veil of twilight,
I lay at your feet;
O, tread not upon it,
My heart's in it, Sweet.

In gath'ring the hoar frost
I trembled all night—
A maiden inhuman
Has turned my face white.

I saw a strange maiden,
Who moved on a cloud,
I heard the swan's death-song,
Love, weave me a shroud!

O take, ere I leave you
My little wee dove;

LYRICS OF A LAD

'Twill woo you to dreaming
Of me, and my love.

Oh, vex not the silence,
As, quiet I lay,
But pray for my soul, Love,
At dawning of day.

LYRICS OF A LAD

REDWINGED BLACKBIRD

Fire-bearer of the gods!—blue-black—
With flecks of sunshine on thy back!
Thou herald Mercury, with flame
Upon thy shoulders! Dost proclaim
In sweat and pangs the pregnant Night
Brings forth the wondrous infant, Light?

Art cardinal in song's high state?
Monk clad in garbadine elate?
Hilado from Ovedio
Or purple-vested nuncio?
From off thy wings thou shakest free
The sunset's scarlet blazonry.

Nay, none of these thou art, I own,
But an arpeggio shaken down
From Song's thick symphony of boughs.
Where all Night's lidded odors drouse;
A feathered arrow flaming, bright,
Shot past the startled glooms of night.

When sunbeams dance in Dawn's ballet
Thou breakest through the blue of day;
A shaft of throbbing crimson flame,
Flown from God's Hand to earth ye came;
Darting bewildered woodlands through,
Unquenched by morning's pools of dew.

THE UGLY WOMAN

O ugly woman, jewel-hung,
 You are a wanton, drunk with wine;
Black scandal sputters from your tongue,
 Your flesh, fit food for swine;
O ugly woman, jewel-hung,
 You are no friend of mine.

Woman inciting poignard's thrust,
 Think not, I am your youthful prey;
You are the body-house of lust,
 A blot on God's bright day.
Woman inciting poignard's thrust,
 Turn, turn those eyes away.

O jeweled parrot, garrulous,
 You are no blossom of the spring;
Your touch is slimy, venomous,
 As any unclean thing;
O jeweled parrot, garrulous,
 Cease, cease, your passioning.

LYRICS OF A LADD

A-BURGEONING.

At dawn of day
Pearl-pale narcissi say,
"Fair was a youth one far-off May;"
A maiden hears, whose head of gold,
Like a Greek marigold,
Is aureoled;

Oh life begun,
The guerdon great is one
Under no earthly moon or sun!
List'ning, bewildered, to the wail
Of one sad nightingale,
Grows passion-pale.

She is at rest
Beside her lover's breast,
A grave enfolds them, as a nest;
Two hyacinths their bells shall ring
In lilac eves of spring
A-burgeoning.

LYRICS OF A LAD

CANZONA AMOROSA

The rose assumes a redder hue,
The bee hums softer all day through,
The linnet pipes, "O, Love be true!"
Whene'er I think of you, beloved,
Whene'er I think of you!

The cloudlets ride, a fairy crew,
The sun is fairer to the view
The sky is robed in clearer blue,
Whene'er I think of you, beloved,
Whene'er I think of you!

The floweret the soft wind blew,
Droops low its head with cooler dew,
The gray old world is changed to new
Whene'er I think of you, beloved,
Whene'er I think of you!

The rose assumes a redder hue,
The bee hums softer all day through,
The linet pipes, "O, Love be true!"
Whene'er I think of you, beloved,
Whene'er I think of you!

THE FOREST OF THE SKY

High in the forest of the sky
The stars and branches interlace;
As cloth-of-gold the fallen leaves lie
Where twilight-peacocks lord the place,
Spendthrifts of pride and grace.

The grapes on vines are rubies red,
They burn as flame, when day is done;
The Dusk, brown Princess, turns her head
While sunset-panthers past her run
To caverns of the Sun.

She throws out reins of sunbeams wrought,
About the sunset-panthers fleet,
And rides them joyously, when caught,
Across the poppied fields of wheat—
Their hearts with terror beat.

They reach the caverns of the Sun,
The raven-clouds above them fly;
Dame Night her tapestry's begun.
High, o'er the forest of the sky
The moon, a boat, sails by.—

LYRICS OF A LAD

LADY OF THE TITIAN HAIR

O Lady of the Titian hair,
The rowan lips, the beryl eyes!
Oh, that I were the brooklet, where
Thy mirrored vision lies, beloved,
Thy mirrored vision lies!

O haunting sylph of mystery,
I sing thee of the risen sun;
Of all the lovely things that be,
Thou art the fairest one, beloved,
Thou art the fairest one.

O beauteous Lady that thou art,
Am I but worthy thy disdain?
I break my heart upon thy heart,
And break it all in vain, beloved,
And break it all in vain.

LYRICS OF A LAD

MARY'S QUEST

And have you seen my little Son
A-passing by to-day?
A butterfly with golden wings
Has lured Him far away.

Oh you would know Him by His eyes,
Twin pools of twilight sweet;
Oh you would know Him by His smile,
And by His little feet.

And if you find Him, give Him drink,
And give Him of your bread,
And mother Him upon your breast,
And stroke His weary head;

And, should a thorn have bruised His hand,
I beg you, wash the stain;
And oh, pray lead Him to my hearth,
And to my arms again.

For I would place Him in my bed,
And close His tender eyes,
And lay my heart anear His heart,
And dream of Paradise.

SAPPHO'S LAST SONG

The rose-gold dawn the mount of amethyst
Enfolds, and lo! a cloud, day's harbinger,
Issues in joy from Heaven's gate. Oh, list!
Hear'st thou soft rainbow songs and the vague stir
Of myriad wings of dawn-awakened birds?

Sweet the green silence of the plain divine
Reflected in the eyes of waiting herds.

Soon, like a boy the sun will laugh and shine;
Sweet is earth's beauty—sweet to me to-day;
I feel a thrill that ne'er before I've felt;
The breeze my glowing brow cools in its play,
And soothes in alms the wounds the Fates have dealt.

Upon a flowery brink alone I stand;
The murmur'ring sea responds to my despair;
Why was it when, in passion, o'er the land,
Nature to me was dead? Ah, me! how fair
All things appear when from new eyes we gaze—
New eyes made clear by tears of bitter salt!
And so the poet sings of joy supreme
While in his heart bleak sorrow makes assault;
He stands without the crowd, praising the scheme
Of the high dawn—he stands and sings and dies;
So o'er my heart a balmy peace now strays
And blows the ashes from my passion's sighs.

LYRICS OF A LAD

Now the gods' eyes search through my soul's deep woe;
Shaken in twilight purple-gray I see
The rosy and the orange apples glow
 Like mellow lamps amid the leaves of green.
While merry warblers 'mid glad leaves entwine
 Entrancing notes of golden melody,
Deep through the woodland crystal brooks on-flow
 Like maids exulting in the sylvan sheen;
Rest, peace and quiet reign throughout the wood;
 Shall peace and quiet evermore be mine?
Soft o'er my head Death draws his downy hood;
 The trees are dumb; Love, do I hear thee sigh?
The darkness falls. I die, Beloved, I die!

LYRICS OF A LADD

SUNRISE IN JULY

The sunrise comes with flame in deep July;
A herald star rides through the daybreak sky;
On field and hill, and down the steep ravine,
A note is heard, the color soft cool-green.

The azure east is warming into rose,
The sun his face majestically shows;
Glad are the songs of morning; downward far
'Mid dawn's white tents I see the loit'ring star.

In ecstasy my soul drains melodies;
Morn bears no shadows for the wayside trees;
No more the meadow-brooklet holds the moon
Deep-cradled in a broken, rippled tune.

Behold, the sky is now afire, full-tide,
Resembling the warm blushes of a bride;
A redthroat pipes his flame-touched note at will
And all the glad earth feels the moment's thrill.

LYRICS OF A LAD

HAD I THY LOVE

Had I thy love
I'd make a necklace of the stars for thee
And golden blazonry of harmony
And color-rhythm and tone would haunt my lays
Like rippling brooks singing through summer days;
The low-voiced wind a captive I would make
And let it labor for thy dear, sweet sake;
I'd steal the cooing of the tender dove
That I might murmur sweeter of my love,
Had I thy love!

Had I thy love
With fairest flowers,—purple, gold and red—
I'd wreath a diadem to crown thy head;
I'd spread a carpet for thy fairy feet
Wrought of life's radiant fancies joy-complete;
Truth, love and beauty would but be a part
Of aught I'd offer; then I'd give my heart.
I'd gather the fresh gladness of the morn
To weave a prayer of thanks that thou wert born
Had I thy love!

Had I thy love
I'd tend a garden of enchanted flowers
Where birds should sing thy name throughout the hours;
I'd weave a robe of morn and sunset hue
Embroidered bright in blossom-scented dew;

LYRICS OF A LAD

A twilight pool should prison thy glad eyes
And dream that they had mirrored Paradise.
When Night should wing its dawn from out the West
I'd lay thy head 'mid dreams upon my breast,
Had I thy love!

THE FRIAR OF GENOA

In Genoa a friar walked;
Of ev'ry sacred tale he talked;
Alone he dwelt, in prayer he knelt;
 “*Ave Maria, Ave Maria!*”
From dawn till dusk he sang.

His bruised and blistered feet were bare;
His head burned in the sunlight's glare.
On stones he slept, and worked and wept,
 “*Ave Maria, Ave Maria!*”
In every blow or pang.

Out of his dole he clothed the poor,
And every hardship did endure;
He blessed the meek and nursed the weak
 “*Ave Maria, Ave Maria!*”
With each succeeding day.

And begged for alms for those in need,
A kind word spoke with every deed,
With sinners dined and led the blind—
 “*Ave Maria, Ave Maria!*”
Until he passed away.

And is his work done? Ah, surprise!
Out of the tomb where low he lies
A perfume blows, as of a rose:

LYRICS OF A LAD

“Ave Maria, Ave Maria!”
It sings in shade and sun.

And he who breathes it, him it feeds,
And stirs his heart to noble deeds;
And one has said, “He is not dead—
“Ave Maria, Ave Maria!
His life has just begun!”

LYRICS OF A LAD

THE MAD WOMAN

Oh blame me not that his lips were red,
Or that my eyes on his eyes went blind.
A leaf am I in a ruthless wind,
I'll dig me a grave and rest me,—dead.

Wolf-winds, a pack,
I dragged by the back
And loosened them at his door;
Asp of despair
Crawl into his lair
And eat his heart to the core!

For the baby he gave to me,
The moon fell into the sea;
The white leopards of foam
Said, "Carry it home;"
So I put it into a sack,
And carried it home on my back.

I lit the lantern of the Sun,
And stole the blue cloth of the sky,
A cover for my little one.
I made his crib. Is that his cry?
Let me run, let me run,
My eyes grow sad for my son.

Spear of the world's scorn in my side,
The grave is deep where a maid may bide,
Ever and ever satisfied.

LYRICS OF A LAD

IN ITALY

In Italy, in Italy,
The oranges hang on the tree,
As lanterns bright, aglow with light,
They shine for lovers through the night.

In Italy, in Italy,
Oh, life is one long Arcady!
The moon grows pale; the nightingale
Stirs every heart, with wail on wail.

In Italy, in Italy,
The rose exhales an ecstasy;
Each humble heart acts well its part,
And welcomes thee, whoe'er thou art.

In Italy, in Italy,
The sky steps down to meet the sea,
The redbird swings, with flame he sings,
And shakes the sunset from his wings—
In Italy, in Italy,
Oh, life is one long Arcady!

LYRICS OF A LAD

HER WAITING

Mournful the twilights,
Solemn the evenings.
Lagging the hours pass,
When one awaits one
That is belovéd;
Night, bring him hither!

Long will he clasp me
In his strong arms. Ah,
Birds sing his praises,
Stars light his pathway,
Winds waft him closer—
Closer and closer!

My heart adores him,
My lips desire him,
Flame thrills my pulses;
Faster my heart beats;
How shall I meet him,
I, who am woman?

Long, long, I've waited,
Though tired, yet happy,
Had I his warm kiss,
His fond embraces,
I'd die enraptured
Knowing he loved me.

LYRICS OF A LADD

TWILIGHT LULLABY

Toddle off to Dreamland, sleepy Curlyhead,
While the Slumber Spirits glide around your bed,
Wandering with Fancy o'er the pools to flowers
Through a land more lovely, more wonderful than ours.

There the skies are brighter; there the days are gold;
There there is no sorrow; none are sad nor old;
There the birds make music through the morns of blue,
Singing joyful praises—singing just for you!

Streams of crystal silver run beside your feet,
Charming blooms and fairies; lambkins play and bleat;
Happy chimes are ringing, sweet melodious sound,
And white-pink laughter ripples; songs of joy abound.

Journey off to Dreamland—thither, babe, away!
Winter soon will shatter the happiness of May.
While the Slumber Spirits lead you to your bed,
Toddle off to Dreamland, little Curlyhead!

LYRICS OF A LAD

ADORATION

Come, O my Love, while Sunset drops unknowing,
Her shawl and poppies on the stair of evening;
The golden stars asleep, in silver cradles,
 The Moon awakens.

An unseen bird sings broken-hearted, silvering
The dreaming woodland. Pan his flute is playing,
A wood-nymph thrills and dances with her lover,
 Like two bacchantes.

Lean on my heart, let us adore this beauty;
The stars glow on the veils of night triumphant,
And Echo lies a-dream in groves of silence,
 The reeds are stirring.

Aurora in her chariot rides, exultant
In sudden glory from the marge of Heaven.
The coloring sky is streaked with arrowy silver
 And blush of roses.

LYRICS OF A LAD

LA TARANTELLA

Italian Folk Dance

Come dance the tarantella,
 Let's dance it merrily!
Our feet shall tread the rhythm,
 Our hearts, beat glad and free;
Come dance the tarantella
 And swing the tambourine,
What joy, what pain, what rapture,
 O little dark-eyed queen!

Come dance the tarantella
La bella tarantella
The merry tarantella
My sweet Italian queen.

Come dance the tarantella,
 My slender sprig of joy!
The music's happy cadence
 Thrills us, fond girl and boy;
Come dance the tarantella,
 My castanets clink, gay;
The love our hearts are holding
 Our lips refuse to say.

Come dance the tarantella
La bella tarantella
The merry tarantella
Love, be my own to-day!

LYRICS OF A LAD

BALLAD OF LOVE-DENIED

I saw the maiden, Love-Denied,
Beside the ocean of the years;
The heart that beat against her breast
Ached—'twas the hive of fears—
I saw the maiden, Love-Denied,
I knew her by her tears.

She found a nest of memories
Whose birds flew, circling, song-content;
Along her strands of loosened hair
Her slender arms were bent;
Behind her, Twilight closed the door
On sleep's imprisonment.

She rocked the cradle in her heart,
Wherein her unborn infant lay,
She rocked it gently, through the night,
And through the stifling day,
And ever of a lover dreamed—
As only women may.

I saw Death with his iron feet
The life from her breast harshly stamp;
The lover finds her on her couch,
Her hair is chill and damp,—
And lo, at heaven's blue windowed house,
God sets the moon for lamp.

LYRICS OF A LAD

He cries his sorrow to the wind
That enters through the blinds. In pain
He falls across the Love-Denied,
The unbesmirched of stain.
A stroke of lightning strikes his heart,
And breaks the heart in twain.

And in this world, like Love-Denied,
Are many broken hearts. Ah me,
They do not know the lover's kiss,
Nor love's deep ecstasy.
Each soul that lives must grieve within
Its own Gethsemane.

LYRICS OF A LAD

CASKET OF INNOCENCE

Darling boy with dream-filled eyes,
Do you dream of Paradise?
Little cherub! you are one,
With the semblance of the sun.
Sweet, your golden curls of seven,
Little blossom strayed from Heaven!

Darling boy, your eyes dream-filled,
Are twin pools by music-thrilled;
Like a snowflake, you are pure,
Innocence, your vestiture;
Than a diamond, you are brighter!
Near you, lilies blossom whiter!

Darling boy with joy endowed,
Have you fallen from a cloud?
Mary's page celestial,
Come to realms terrestrial?
Little sunbeam on the river,
Bear my praise to God, the Giver.

LYRICS OF A LAD

VISION OF TWO LOVERS

“Infinity of sky and sea,
Bring my Beloved to me!
Winds, winds, invade
The damask gloom of shade,
Where we once laid.

“Ah, since that night
When to her window, she came forth as light,
Have I been Beauty’s acolyte.
The odorous jasamine
Confesses she is mine,
And, finding her most fair,
The sunbeams sought her hair,
And rested there.

“Sing, sing,
O birds of Spring!
Pour forth song’s silver on the mating bough;
That I may meet her now
Death, Death, kiss, kiss my brow!”

Lo, from its mould of clay
His spirit soared away.

Her waist engirdled was
With lilies generous,

LYRICS OF A LAD

Her brow was star-endowed,
She floated on a cloud
Of daffodil and rose and amethyst;
Of vapor was her mantled robe of mist.
With kiss, her lover, where the moon kept gate,
I saw her consecrate.
Above God's blue, starred canopy of sky,
With answering sigh for sigh,
The lovers sat, until the Dawn rode by.

LYRICS OF A LAD

BIRTH OF THE DAFFODIL

The sun went down behind the hill
 Enwrapped in azure haze,
And took with him against their will
 His little golden rays,
But one, that wandered far a-field,
 Was left behind alone;
Entangled in the waving grass
 Its glittering beauty shone.

Out from the wood of melody
 Two streams of song swift ran,
The peace-birds piped their minstrelsy,
 The stars watched over Pan;
And when the rosy dawn awoke
 Close to a jocund rill,
Lo, waving in the green spring grass
 There bloomed a daffodil.

LYRICS OF A LAD

WERE YOU BUT MINE

Were you but mine
The moon as halo you should wear,
The stars of midnight for your hair,
I'd thread Dawn's pearls upon a string,
The sun's red rubies for your ring;
With sunset-poppies on your head,
The air, as earth, your feet should tread,
Your eyes should thrill my veins like wine,
The world I'd give you at a sign
Were you but mine!

Were you but mine
In cloud and rainbow-hued brocade
Your lithe-limbed form should be arrayed,
About your torso's lovely space
A sash of moonbeams I should place;
Upon your curved lips' wistfulness
A mouth impassioned I should press,
Before your beauty—exquisite,
A lamp of worship should be lit,
Were you but mine!

Were you but mine
Purged of all stain and base desire,
My soul to your height should aspire;
Ah, nevermore your eyes should weep;

LYRICS OF A LAD

I'd kiss and clasp you in your sleep.
The Hand of God the bow should sway,
The 'cello of the Night should play
Sonorous, sad and tremulous,
'Twould stir the very depths of us
Were you but mine!

FOREBODING

Unclose, Night's purple-petalled rose!
Reveal the stars that form thy golden heart,
O mystic rose, the flowering of God's art;
Guard thou the infant slumbering in repose,
Across its breast its sleep-numbed fingers close;
And thus they lie, until
On Heaven's blue window sill
God sets the lark, a-singing,
A-singing, singing, flinging
Song's living azure; 'tis his lay
Enchants and ushers in the Day,
And wakes the angel, Light,
Whose sword unsheathed, slays the dragon, Night.

Woe, when the candle of her day
Hath burned itself away!
In maidenhood her hands will fold
In their last hold,
While wintry clouds, their cloaks of woe
Will spread before the sun,
And God alone—Oh, God alone—will know
The grief of one!
Her cold and rigid hands
Will be as iron-bands
Around her lover's heart;
O thou, whoe'er thou art,
Who yet wilt live,

LYRICS OF A LAD

O'er thee will winter, through the sky's gray sieve,
Sift down his charity of snow ;
But she, she will not care nor know,
She will not care nor know.

LYRICS OF A LAD

LYRIC OF A LOVER

Because I find thy checks most fair,
 No roses do I see;
And since thy eyes have met my eyes
 No violets dance for me;
Thy golden hair has meshed my soul,
 There is no sun—but thee!

Enravished by thy melody
 The stream stops, for a space.
Behold, the peacock follows thee,
 And tries to learn thy grace.
The very moon grows passion-pale
 In gazing on thy face.

I gave up lilacs when ye came,
 I heeded not the Spring.
Ah, with thy hand within my hand,
 What need for anything!
My heart respondeth to thy heart,
 As 'cello to the string.

THE LEOPARD

Crouching upon the western height
The shadowy leopard, Night,
Pounces and grips the maiden, Day, at rest,
And claws her heaving breast;
The tangled sunshine in her hair
As fire-flies fall adown the air,
The savage, panting beast
Devours his mangled feast;
Below the ramparts, where she bled,
The sunset floweth red,
And at the fiendish sight,
Day's golden wine turns purple in affright.

A-past dawn's loitering star
In pursuit of the shadowy leopard, Night,
Drawn by swift galloping cloud-steeds, in his car,
The Sun, an Indian Archer, aims aright;—
Lo, from his bow the arrow wings its flight,
And the slain leopard tumbles out of sight.

LYRICS OF A LAD

FANTASY OF DUSK AND DAWN

O dusk, you brown cocoon,
Release your moth, the moon!
The tapers of the night her wings await;
Storms, storms, abate,
And cease to desecrate
With the unbridled fury of your hate,
The mottled flags that in the marshes lie;
Closing its frightened eye,
The peacock stabs the silence with its cry.

In gossamer drapery,
Bare at a breast, and knee,
The Goddess, Dawn, steps through a garden-close
And the white rose whiter glows;
The frail syringa's snows
Around her, blow,
And when she wills
The gypsy-daffodills,
Beautiful grow.

Lucretia Borgia fair,
The poppy is. Beware!
Her gorgeous chalice, deep,
Contains the drug of sleep;
And Death the soul will keep,
That tastes it unaware.

LYRICS OF A LAD

A FISHERMAN SPEAKS

Anno Domini, thirty-three

Oh He who walked with fishermen
Was man of men in Galilee;
He told us endless wonder-tales,
His laugh was hale and free.

The water changed He into wine
To please a poor man's company;
I saw Him walk one wretched night
Upon a troubled sea.

And when the rabble cried for blood,
I saw Him nailed upon a tree;
He showed how a brave man could die;
The Prince of men was He.

And rough men, we, who never wept,
Wept when they nailed Him to the tree;
Oh He was more than man, who walked
With us in Galilee.

LYRICS OF A LADD

REVELATION

I found you, bleeding, bleeding, bleeding,
Amid the heart of war's red hell;
I tended you, without your heeding,
Nor stopped to say farewell;
Still I am less than dust the streets afford
To you, my lord!

I'd be your slave, forever, ever,
Should you but say the word. Ah me!
Each precious tie I'd gladly sever,
And do it happily;
What time I'd bear your babe behind my heart,
Of you a part!

All night, all night, the wind went sighing
Your haunting name, my dear, my dear;
At dawn I woke, a-crying, crying,
And found you were not near;
Like a gray gull gray lonely seas above,
I seek you, Love!

And shall my vigil be abated,
And shall I see the Sun to-day?
Long have I waited, staunch, elated;
Strike with your sword, and slay;
Or slay me, lover, slay me with a kiss,
For greater bliss!

LYRICS OF A LAD

HEROES

Written in Hull-House, founded by Jane Addams

Who are earth's heroes? List to the reply:

 A dreamer, hungry-hearted, serving Song,

 A soul that rights a weak soul's burning wrong,
Such acts will live e'en though the nations die!

Such deeds in God's great Book recorded lie:

 A mother for an orphaned brood grown strong;

 A noble life self-sacrificed. Oh long

The list of heroes! None may truth deny!

Earth's heroes are kind-voiced and saintly-browed;

 Put by your laurel wreaths and herald horns!

 They pass all burden-bent, the much-denied
Who live unnoticed 'mid the struggling crowd.

 Their brows bear impress of the crown of thorns,

 These mute white Christs—the daily crucified!

LYRICS OF A LAD

HER ROOM

This is the room of her who late was fair;
The room is sad, and empty of her grace,
The sunset-window burns, and feels her face;
Of satin's swirl bewidowed is the stair,
And Silence keeps the perfume of her hair—
Ah, Music's spirit haunts the sacred place!
Her heart thrilled to a song in my embrace
My tears are hot for memories I bear!

White dove, Rememb'rance, on the window sill,
Whose wings are burnished in gray twilight's gleam,
Hushed be your croon for her whose gentleness
Gave you your song and me my heav'n. How still
The room is! What pulsation to a theme!
Here Speech has found a speech in speechlessness!

LYRICS OF A LAD

DANTE IN RAVENNA

His cloak is flung about him frayed and poor,
The Florentines have closed their scornful gate;
The beret on his head folds desolate;
In the Ravenna street, before my door
He passes, grave and solemn as of yore;
His face is sad and mournful as his gait;
His eyes gaze upward as he weeps at Fate;
Around his heart the bleakest tempests roar.

I, too, O Florentine, have heard the knell;
My eyes have seen the woe, the suffering;
My ears have caught the cries from sorrow's cell.
The blood-stained linen of the anguishing
Upon the pain-couch lies at vesper bell,
And thousands cry: "O, who has been in hell!"

LYRICS OF A LAD

BEATA BEATRIX

Rossetti's painting in the collection of Charles L. Hutchinson

Her head rests backward, shut o'er dreams her eyes;
Her cheek is pale with virgin mysteries
She folds a poppy on life's miseries,
While in her hair the sunset's glory lies,
Her ecstasy is one of Paradise;—
Love lays his fingers on her spirit's keys,
Life's harmony thrills into symphonies,
She sees the face of Dante—and she sighs.

O joy profound! O poignant happiness!
O mortalkind, knowest what I have seen?
(Lo, in my soul there blooms the rose of peace!)
What, think ye, came my humble life to bless?
I saw a figure from high Heaven lean,
Lo, I have seen the face of Beatrice!—

THE GOLDEN WITCH

The golden witch, the golden witch
Is world-persuading fair;
Her beauty is an evil charm
To lure you in her snare,
And she can bind you prisoner
With but a strand of hair.

She has a smile that Lilith taught,
Wherewith she works a spell,
And he who has beheld her smile
Has both of Heaven and Hell;
He follows her forevermore
And ever thinks it well.

The crimson rose a crimson flame
Unto her beauty, burns,
The sky in envy of her cheeks
To crimson blushing turns,
And every youth she looks upon
For her false bosom yearns.

Their grief for the spell-stricken ones
The helpless flowers declare;
The poppy, regal Borgia, said:
“I’ll rid her of her snare;
The poison that is in my cup
Shall drug her unaware.”

LYRICS OF A LAD

But when with her sweet loveliness
And her gold hair she came,
The flowers that were to vengeance vowed
Her worshipers became;
Enchanted winds and birds and streams
Sang but her name, her name.

Oh, gaze not on the golden witch,
Nor on her golden hair;
Drain not the red rose of her mouth,
Press not her bosom fair;
Her golden hair's a golden net,
To prison your despair.

LYRICS OF A LAD

THREE APPLES

I who am Giver of Life
Out of the cradle of dawn
Bring you this infant of song.—
He has a golden tongue
And wings upon his feet.

The apple of silver he holds
Once lay at the breast of the moon;
I give him an apple of gold—
'Twas forged in the fires of the sun;
This apple of copper I give
That Sunset concealed in her hair.

When from the husk of dusk I shake the stars,
Down slumber's vine I'll send him dreams in dew,
And peace will overtake him like a song,
Like thoughts of love invade a lover's mind.
The spear-scars of the red world he will wear
As women in their hair may wear a rose.

On the rosary of his days
He will say a prayer for your sake;
The hounds-o'-wonder will lie at his side,
And lick the dust-o'-the-world from his feet.

The apple of silver will work him a charm
When under his pillow he lays it at night;

LYRICS OF A LAD

The apple of copper will warm his heart
When a heart he loves grows cold on his own;
The apple of gold will teach him a song
For children to sing when he blows on a reed;
The dew will hear and run to the sun,
The sun will whisper it in my ear,
And you, being dead, the song will hear.

MINIATURE LYRICS

MINIATURE LYRICS

APRIL

I loved her more than moon or sun—
There is no moon or sun for me;
Of lovely things to look upon,
The loveliest was she.

She does not hear me, though I sing—
And, oh, my heart is like to break!
The world awakens with the Spring,
But she—she does not wake!

SCARLET—WHITE

(*Struck at the double standard.*)
The woman who is scarlet now
Was soul of whiteness yesterday;
A void is she wherein a man
May leave his lust to-day.

'Twas with the kiss Iscariot
A traitor bore her heart away;
Her body now is leased by men
Who kneel at church to pray.

LYRICS OF A LAD

LYRIC

The lyric has a heart of flame
And wings of fire;
The soul, a lyric, flutters high
And ever higher.

LATE JANUARY

The frozen streams in agony are praying;
Through the red twilight their wind-whispers creep;
While from each bough, in the late day flush graying,
Down droppeth sleep.

In mournful rhythm snowsifts are descending;
Through broken cloudracks winds the hill-tops plow;
In the deep valley, chanting dirge unending,
Tall marsh-reeds bow.

Sheep, thickly huddled, on the hillsides shiver;
The prostrate pastures lifeless, wait, all bare;
Night: and from house-roofs, like white smoke forever,
Upriseth prayer.

LYRICS OF A LADD

SONG FOR A ROSE

The rose to you is but a rose,
To me, it is the flower of love;
Oh, 'tis the rose alone that knows
The one my heart is dreaming of.

The wind the rose's petals blows,
That close its golden heart above;
The rose, with passion redder grows,
And drains my heart's crimson thereof.

Oh, 'tis the rose alone that knows
The one my heart is dreaming of;
The rose to you is but a rose,
To me, it is the flower of love.

ITERATION

My son is dead and I am going blind,
And in the Ishmael-wind of grief
I tremble like a leaf;
I have no mind for any word you say:
My son is dead and I am going blind.

LYRICS OF A LAD

THE FLOWER SKY

The daffodil is in the sky,
Upon the cloud, the rose;
The violets enraptured lie
Along the eveningglows.

The myrtle blue is risen high
On Evening's silvern stair;
The tiger-lilies terrify
The sunset in his lair.

The marsh-born flags of purple dye—
The minstrel eveningglows—
The daffodil is in the sky,
Upon the cloud, the rose.

WHY DO YOU WEEP?

“Why do you weep, O maid?”
I asked in sympathy.
“Is it for sorrow past,
Or sorrow yet to be?”

“Oh ask me not,” she said,
“His eyes were like the sea—
They laid him in the earth,
And broke the heart of me.”

LYRICS OF A LAD

NOTTURNO

Upon the Sunset's heart
The Dusk has wept her tears;
Love, must we live apart,
Through all the years?

The stars burn,—candles bright
Lit round pale Twilight's bier;—
The Moon grieves night by night,
You are not here!

The Night communes with Death
And drains the heart thereof;
I feel a ghost-chill breath;
Is it you, my Love?

INTERPRETATION

They say my heart is light with joy; I sing
And all proclaim I have a heart most gay.
My heart is winter though my songs are spring;
None know the suffering I bear each day;
Yet hearts that listen speechless, without moan,
I know must be still sadder than my own.

LYRICS OF A LAD

THE LITTLE BIRDS

The sky is like a nun in gray;
A host ensilvered is the moon;
The white birds fly, adown the sky
They make of memory a rune.

They flutter on, these restless birds;
So pale their wings against my hair;
The trees are white; while in their flight
The little birds go everywhere.

The weary birds with breezes played
Until the wizard sun of red
Shot arrows gold amid their fold.
Alas! the little birds are dead.

A HEART-THROB

I am a-weary as the wind
That wails through graveyard beeches sere,
Or like an orphan-bird, sea-blown,
That finds no cheer.

Oh, would to-night a star might lead
This wayworn pilgrim to His feet;
I'd weep my heart still, in His sight,
And rest complete.

LYRICS OF A LADD

EVENING

Spirit of Evening, furl your wings of light!
Weep for the Dusk-slain Twilight on your breast;
From sunset-fires arise the stars of night,
The moon, a babe, in pools is rocked to rest.

EARLY NIGHTFALL

The pale Day drowses on the western steep,
The toiler faints along the marge of sleep,
Within the sunset-press, incarnadine,
The Sun, a peasant, tramples out his wine.

Ah, scattered gold rests on the twilight-streams,
The poppy opes her scarlet purse of dreams;
Night, with the sickle-moon engarners wheat,
And binds the sheaves of stars beneath her feet.

Rest, weary heart, and every flight-worn bird;
The brooklet of the meadow lies unstirred;
Sleep, every soul, against a comrade breast,
God grant you peace, and guard you in your rest!

LYRICS OF A LADD

A NAMELESS PRAYER

Reach down Thy hands, O Christ,
And lift this sinking form;
Thou, Christ upon the cross,
Still thou life's madd'ning storm!

Stretch forth Thy arms, O Christ,
Weary am I of pain;
Take Thou my broken heart,
And make it whole again.

THE VISIONARY

He stole the pennies on a dead man's eyes,
To buy him bread who spilled the gold of song,
He struck at error; with the right was strong.
The future shall his dreams materialize!

God's golden bird, loosened from Paradise,
Died unbeknown, a-near a wayside inn.
A breast-wound showed where late a grief had been—
They laid two pennies on the dead man's eyes.

LYRICS OF A LAD

LAMENT

Lady, your heart has turned to dust,
Your wail is taken by the sea;
The wind is knocking at my heart,
And will not let me be.

Your moaning smites me in my dreams,
And I must sorrow till I die;
And I shall rove, and I shall weep,
Till in the grave I lie.

AFTER THE MARTYRDOM

They threw a stone, you threw a stone,
I threw a stone that day;
Although their sharpness bruised his flesh
He had no word to say.

But for the moan he did not make,
To-day I make my moan;
And for the stone I threw at him
My heart must bear a stone.

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